

School Building Subcommittee of the Sustainability Committee
Minutes of Special Meeting
February 22, 2012

Present: Kristin Schwab, Bill Lennon, Lynn Stoddard

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by chair Lynn Stoddard.

Participants noted that the Town Council had voted to support a plan for 2 new school buildings, with a referral to Planning & Zoning Committee to provide advice to the Council on the appropriate sites for building 2 new schools. As such, the subcommittee decided that the most useful input from the Sustainability Committee would be to focus on the siting of the new buildings rather than further deliberation on whether to renovate or build new schools. Further, the subcommittee noted that the siting issue has very significant sustainability implications and is thus a very important issue for the Sustainability Committee to provide input on.

Subcommittee members all noted that, from a sustainability perspective, it is most important to help the town identify *a process* for determining appropriate sites and that it would be useful to approach this process with no specific sites in mind. The subcommittee discussed the following process as a method to identify sites and decided to meet again to develop this process further:

1. Select a few areas in town that the town has identified for growth based on sustainability principles (i.e., dense, mixed use, walkable, transit-oriented) and that are existing/future community or village hubs (i.e., concentration of community amenities, housing, public spaces).
2. Draw a circle with a 2 mile (? – possibly less) radius around these community hubs.
3. Within these community hub bubbles, perform a “suitability analysis” by mapping physical/natural/cultural constraints and values.
4. The mapping of *physical/natural/cultural features to be avoided* in school siting (constraints) could include the following: wetlands and watercourses, prime agricultural soils, significant natural areas.
5. The mapping of *physical/natural/cultural features that would add value* to being close to a school (values) could include: civic gathering places (libraries, community center), recreation fields, proximity to planned higher density residential neighborhoods, potential for shared infrastructure, “complete” streets (potential).

This site suitability analysis would identify areas of town for potential school sites based on the data of physical/natural/cultural features and sustainability principles. The benefits of such a comprehensive data-driven process are many: provides an open-ended siting analysis, removes mental barriers related to current land use and ownership, and diffuses emotional investment in one site over another.

The subcommittee will look at maps in the Plan of Conservation and Development for potential use in performing the suitability analysis and meet again on 2/28.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lynn Stoddard